

WKEUVME – Workshop on EU regulatory area options for VME protection

2020/2/FRSG44 The **Workshop on EU regulatory area options for VME protection (WKEUVME)**, chaired by Ellen Kenchington (Canada) and Peter Hopkins (Belgium) will meet 18-28 May 2020 by correspondence, and date tbd in Brussels, Belgium. The workshop is tasked to:

- a) Establish a draft workflow, with respective criteria for area selection, which can be applied to propose a set of regulatory area options using available ICES data. The regulatory area options will vary in the priority given to VME protection and fisheries. The applicability of the workflow will be demonstrated in a test area.
- b) Establish for the larger area, based on review by WGECO, a set of regulatory area options that vary in the degree of VME protection and estimate for each of the options how it will affect bottom fisheries. Prepare a dissemination document of the regulatory area options, and the workflow and criteria used, in a way appropriate to get input from stakeholders during a meeting with EU Member States and/or relevant Advisory Council members. The dissemination document will be delivered by 5 June.
- c) Run a dissemination meeting in Brussels, Belgium (24-25 June) to discuss the regulatory area options that the workflow and criteria produce. Gather stakeholder arguments and preferences that can be used to fine-tune a list of closed area boundaries and identify knowledge gaps associated with each proposed area.

In preparation for the workshop meeting, the Chairs Ellen Kenchington (Canada) and Peter Hopkins (Belgium), together with five ACOM invited attendees will facilitate coordination and consolidation of work on TOR a-c. This group will also help ensure that the workshop report is finalized.

WKEUVME will report to the attention of ACOM by 31 August 2020.

Supporting information

Scientific justification WKEUVME will suggest regulatory areas options in line with the deep-sea access regulation that vary in the degree of VME protection from bottom fishing. The work will build on from Phase 1 (Technical Service and WKREG workshop), as well as previous ICES advice (ICES 2018a) and technical services (ICES 2018b). All work will draw upon the available VMEs and fishing activity data at ICES that has been quality assured following the respective annual ICES data calls for VMS/logbook ([link](#)) and VMEs ([link](#)).

Term of Reference a)

Members of the planning team, i.e., the core group, will also meet 23-24 March. This core group for WKEUVME will propose, as a working document, a workflow that can be used to propose a set of regulatory area options. The workflow will have criteria for area selection that can be used with available data at ICES. The workflow will include a set of constraints (e.g. depth limits, enforceable areas, number of coordinates per area) in line with the deep-sea access regulation (EU) 2016/2336 to assess proposed area closures. The workflow will describe different VME protection scenarios with definitions of any terms and values used. The workflow will serve as input to carry out the required technical work. The applicability of the workflow will be demonstrated in a test area where WKEUVME will suggest regulatory area options. These options should vary in the degree of

VME protection from bottom fishing. The work plan and test case area will be delivered as a working document to WGECO for review by 31 March.

Term of Reference b)

Using the developed workflow and criteria reviewed by WGECO, WKEUVME will establish a set of regulatory area options in a second meeting (18-22 May). Scientific participation from EU countries in the North East Atlantic that can enhance the information content of the data (add additional knowledge of VME and fisheries, identify current closed areas in the relevant locations etc). WKEUVME will estimate for each of the regulatory area options how area closures for VME protection will affect fisheries (e.g. spatial footprint and intensity of bottom fishing).

Term of Reference c)

WKEUVME will prepare a dissemination document of workshop material in a way appropriate to get input from stakeholders during a meeting (24-25 June) with EU Member States and/or relevant Advisory Council members. The dissemination document will be delivered by 5 June.
